



Is Technology on the Menu in Foodservice?

If you've had your eye on the foodservice industry in recent years, you've probably noticed that it's not what it used to be. A symbol of this shift recently flashed across the national newswire when it was widely reported that McDonald's was considering adding kale to its menu items. While the idea of a kale-flavored shake might not whet your appetite, the fast food giant was responding to increasing customer demand for healthier, fresher food options. That's not the only pressure the fast food industry is under, and it's clear we're in the midst of a significant transition.

Fast casual restaurants like Chipotle and Panera Bread have encroached into traditional fast food territory. Capturing market share and the hearts of consumers, these trendier establishments offer a dining experience that splits the difference between fast food and fine dining. Their menus are designed to appeal to today's more sophisticated sensibilities, using organic, free-range, antibiotic-free ingredients in higher-quality, freshly prepared meals.

If that wasn't enough to shake things up, many convenience stores are also entering into the foodservice business as more consumers look to them as a viable option.

There's no question foodservice is an increasingly intertwined space, with a multitude of retailers competing for consumer preferences. It's a space where margins are tight and maintaining customer loyalty leaves little room for error.

Where does Emerson fit into this scenario, you ask? We may be widely known for our best-in-class refrigeration hardware, but for more than a decade we have been in the electronic controls business, working with refrigeration and air conditioning manufacturers to connect equipment and building systems. It's a concept often referred to as the Internet of Things (IoT). This technology has been put to use in supermarkets to reduce maintenance, protect food inventories, optimize energy and servicing efficiencies, and plan for future expenditures — all while giving facility managers real-time visibility into operations.

We're also actively exploring the vast potential of IoT for connected kitchens, equipment and building systems in foodservice. In this edition of *E360 Outlook*, we'll take a closer look at how the connected kitchen can be used to give foodservice retailers a much needed competitive edge. You'll also find examples of how connectivity is helping food retailers (both large and small) improve their operational performance. It's our hope that these concepts inspire you to consider the possibilities, and we encourage you to share your opinions.

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